THE

SIDDHANTA DEEPIKA

OR THE

LIGHT OF TRUTH

A monthly Journal devoted to Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Science, &c.

COMMENCED ON THE QUEEN'S COMMEMORATION DAY, 1897.

Vol. IX.] JANUARY, 1909. No. 7

THE SERPENT AS A SYMBOL.

"*Be ye wise as Serpents.*"—JESUS.

The snake has long been considered as a symbol of wisdom, but they are, as a rule, abnormally stupid, sluggish, shortsighted and wanting in all that goes to make up a wiseman. Yet in all times and countries mankind has compared its wise ones to the serpent. The ancient mexicans had their Nargals, the Hindus their Nagas, the Druids in ancient Britain would call themselves serpents, and in distant China, "lang," the dragon, signifies "the being who excels in intelligence." Aesculapius had his serpent wand. Moses, full of magic lore of Egypt, used the brazen serpent as a talisman for the healing of his stricken followers. Since the snake itself lacks wisdom, let us enquire whether its anatomy and natural history may not afford material for the play of that imagination, which represents viewless ideas by visible symbols.

A striking fact about every true snake is that he has no eyelids, but, like the fish, sleeps with his eyes wide open. The Initiate has always claimed unbroken consciousness, and while to the common man there is what Wordsworth calls a "barrier, twixt day and day," the wise man preserves unbroken his thread of continuous consciousness. Though his body sleeps, he lives an active conscious existence, until the time of waking comes round again, when he descends, and merging in his body goes through the daily penance of physical existence. In the "Voice of the Silence" there is an allusion to "the eye that never closes."

Every few weeks the snake casts his slough, and creeping out of his faded cuticle, appears in new and shining scales, over whose glossy surface play the colours of the rainbow. This proceeding well typifies the evolving soul who takes and leaves one body after another, until "made perfect through sufferings" he incarnates no more unless impelled by compassion for the sake of suffering fellowmen.

Examine a snake as he crawls on the ground, and note his sinuous, undulating curves. Science shows all force to proceed by waves, rhythmical disturbance in air, water or ether, and as the snake winds his way we are forcibly reminded of the conqueror of his lower nature, who controls and guides the crude energy of his body and devoting it to loftier purposes, becomes indeed an expert in the science of vibrations.

The serpent is a dumb animal; he has no voice. The well-known hiss is not vocal, and is caused simply by the escape of air under pressure from the orifice of the mouth. The real mystic does not tell what he knows in noisy or uttered speech; the real work is done in silence, and the pupil's inner nature is played upon by those wonderful vibrations of which our gross sense organs can give us no tidings.

There are two classes of snakes, the poisonous and the harmless ones. There are two schools of magic, the black and the

white. How subtle are the workings of the serpent's venom! A tiny prick a drop of innocent looking fluid in the veins, and presently the victim throbs all over, swells and dies in agony. A poisonous serpent of the human race works just so. A hint, a light suggestion couched in a jest, and the poison works its malignant way, till the victim falls by the way, a despairing, doubting, disloyal corpse. The poison should be sucked out immediately, but a better way is to avoid dangerous company, or to protect oneself with the armor of devotion and whole-souled loyalty.

The serpent can fast for a year or more without any great inconvenience ; he would be a serpent of wisdom must cultivate dispassion towards object of sense. Not that the neophyte should abstain from any of his wonted meals, but he must abstain from giving attention to flavors, and should close his mind to the pleasures of the palate.

All snakes are very fond of milk. Milk is the food of babes and sucklings, and this curious taste on the part of the snake well symbolises the fact that before he can reach the state of wisdom the pupil must regain the child state he has lost. The simple, innocent tastes of the child are the mark of the Initiate, and in this connection it is interesting to note that Paul is alluded to in the Talmud as "the little one."

A GRADUATE.

WHAT IS CHIDAMBARAM?

Chidambaram is derived from two Sanskrit words Chit and Ambaram. Chit means knowledge and Ambaram means Akasam, *i.e.* Ether. Both words mean "Ether of Knowledge" or knowledge itself.

The scientific world has discovered that Ether is the basis of all the material universe and the Vedas declare that (Wisdom), Pragnanam is the source of Ether. Nature's finer forces are centered in the Ether of Wisdom, *i. e.*, Chidambaram. Chidambaram is the only seat of all science and learning. Whatever a man thinks, sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels are all Chidambaram. All thoughts proceed from Chidambaram and go back to Chidambaram. The sounds also come from that sphere. Forms are the manifested conditions of the unconditioned Supreme Wisdom which the Vedas call Pragnanam. Chidambaram, Chidakasam, and Pragnanam all mean Supreme Wisdom. The Sun pours forth his rays in all directions. The rays themselves are not the sun but the rays are not without the Sun. In the same way the various phenomena in the universe are the lustre of the Supreme Effulgence which in reality have no change or mood but the various forms the phenomenal world may have with Chidambaram as their common and permanent centre. Jewels may appear various but gold is same. Jewels are not gold and jewels have no existence without gold. Jewels with names and forms have no reality without gold. In the like manner the names and forms of this universe are nothing but the manifestations of the self-effulgent and blissful Pragnanam—Rig Veda gives to us in its Holy words that "*Pragnanam Brahmam*" which means "*Supreme-wisdom is God.*" This Supreme wisdom pervades everywhere. It is unlimited, ever shining and ever blissful. The various mental and intellectual productions in this universe are only the rays of that Supreme effulgence, Every invention of the human brain is only the reflection of that supreme-light Chidambaram, which Theosophists call the *Astral light.* He who wishes to have a look at this light should purify his heart by good actions and elevate himself above the ordinary plane. This elevation brings upon him peace, harmony, mental equillibrium and perfect wisdom. Pairs of opposites do not affect his mind. He is ever calm and peaceful. This universe is a Paradise to him. Santhi (peace) is the watchword of such a Divine Man. The great sage Patanjali, author of "*Yoga Sutrams,*" is the fonnder of Chidambaram temple in South Arcot wherein he has explained the above truth by way of Symbolism. This is the secret of Chidambaram. Yogies and philosophers understand its truth. *Om Tat Sat.*

M. B.

THE HON. MR. P. ARUNACHALAM.

The Hon'ble Mr. P. Arunachalam, M.A., Cantab, Barrister-at-Law, Lincoln's Inn, C.G.S., M.L.C., J.P., U.P.M., President, Ceylon University Association; Vice-President Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society; Vice-President Ceylom Agricultural Society; Vice-President Royal College Union; Covenanted Civilian of 1st class 1 grade; Director-General of the Ceylon Census 1901; Registrar General.

A DISTINGUISHED FAMILY.

Few Ceylonese families have, within the period comprised in the history of our own times, filled so great a space in the public life of this Island and achieved so much distinction as that, which, after contributing some of the greatest names in the politics, literature, philosophy and social life of the last century, has in our day, culminated its lustre in the production of the brothers Ponnambalam Coomaraswamy, Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Ponnambalam Arunachalam. Coomaraswamy, sturdy champion, shrewd thinker, enthusiastic leader, wise legislator and vigilant patriot, died at the end of 1906, after a career which would have crowned his family, had it produced no other great man, with lasting honour. Ramanathan and Arunachalam—*par nobile fratrum*—are with us yet, each with a proud record of achievement and distinction behind him already, and each pledged to the promise of achievements more honourable and valuable still. Mr. Ramanathan's life and work formed the subject of the fourth sketch of this series, published on the 16th February. There something was said of the family which has produced so much talent, how the founders of the Ceylon branch, themselves Mudaliyars and Scions of a family already ancient in Madura, attended their liege Princes on their conquering invasion to Ceylon at the end of the twelfth century and settled in the north of the Island. The great-great-grand-father of the brothers Ponnambalam was their namesake, Ponnambalam, surnamed Dharmavan, the Munificent, a founder of temples, helper of educa-

tion and philanthropist. Coomaraswamy Mudaliyar, their maternal grand-father, was the Tamil member of the Legislative Council. Their mother was a sister of Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy. a name which stands out in bold relief in the history of the Islands. The family is d stinguished by names which have reflected distinction upon the Ceylonese community. Those who read the sketch dealing with the career of Mr. Ramanathan will not need to be reminded of the many titles of this family to the respect and admiration of the Ceylonese people. Besides, a family, which has given us the late Mr. Coomaraswamy, Mr. Ramanathan, the Hon. Mr. Arunacnalam and Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy in one generation, need not trouble to exhibit any other credentials of its capacity to produce consistent merit.

STATE CRAFT IN THE EAST.

Ponnambalam Arunachalam, the youngest of the three great brothers, has carved out a career so distinguished in a direction generally esteemed so unpromising with a persistence and an ability so rare, that his achievements have furnished a guarantee and an object lesson as much to his countrymen as to the members of the ruling race. Until Mr. Arunachalam established the contrary, service of Government was the last sphere which a Ceylonese would select for the accomplishment of talent and the attainment of ambition. Probably, the opinion of the European rulers of the country would confirm these misgivings. The Eastern races have not in the past displayed any marked inherited aptitude for administration. Their history and modes of thought have not tended to develop in them the faculty for responsible rule which is the predominant characteristic of the British people. The East has been the home of poets, priests, philosophers, not of rulers and administrators. Here and there a great ruler does stand out conspicuous by his wisdom, foresight, justice and the gift of managing men and kingdoms. These, however, stand out all the more conspicuously because they are exceptions. The soil of

India and Ceylon does not normally produce such men. Statecraft and the divine right to govern are the inheritance of the race which rules India and Ceylon to-day It is an inheritance the development of which has been favoured by the peculiar history of that people. It is an exotic in these latitudes and is hard to acclimatize. Its growth is never spontaneous or steady. It needs that constant care and vigilance of those who planted it upon our soil. Such, at least, is the general impression, the received doctrine, and that it has claims to soundness it is difficult to dispute. Mr. Arunachalam's career removes much of that difficulty. So far as he is concerned, he has established that it is possible for a native of Ceylon to possess as great an aptitude for administration as is displayed by the British-born administrators of these countries. His record is therefore a pledge, a hope and an example to men of both races in Ceylon.

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD.

Ponnambalam Arunachalam, the youngest son of the late Mudaliyar Ponnambalam, was born on the 14th September, 1853, in Sea Street, Colombo, at that time the headquarters of the leading Hindus. Coomaraswamy Mudaliyar, his son, Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy, and many an other prominent Tamil was born and lived there The inroads of the Natucotta Chetty afterwards led to the whole quarter being surrendered to the trader and the moneylender, and the Ponnambalam family abandoned the locality and established themselves at Mutwal, in the house which afterwards became Mr. Coomaraswamy's town residence. Mr. Arunachalam passed his early years and youth in the house, till he ended his college career in Colombo and went to Cambridge. Like his two elder brothers, young Arunachalam had his education at the old Academy, and he is one of the few of Dr. Boake's pupils who never changed his allegiance to that seat of education. Being the last of three brothers, he entered and passed through most of the classes of the old school free of fees. While in the class of Mr. John Pereira, father of the Solicitor-General, Arunachalam

secured the Queen's scholarship of Rs. 20 a month. Mr. Pereira, Arunachalam thinks, was one of the most efficient masters on Dr. Boake's staff. Messrs J. T. Blaze, John Casie Chetty—the University scholar of his year—Dornhorst, the De Sarams, Keuneman, and some of the Anthoniszes were Arunacalam's contemporaries in the Academy, from the class-rooms of which there were given to Ceylon so many of its best and most eminent men. Dr Boake conceived a very strong attachment to the youngest of the Ponnambalams and entertained great hopes of his future. The sturdy old man was not one to make favorites easily, nor did his expressions in regard to them often wander into the superlatives. But when summing up Arunachalam's ten years—1860 to 1870—at the Academy, in his certificate, he speaks warmly of his singular abilities and application, of his distinctions in the classes and in the examinations of the Madras and Calcutta Universities. In my forty years' experience in the instruction of youth, I have never met with any pupil who gave greater evidence of ability, and scarcely one who gave so great. Mr. Arunachalam's conduct has always been most satisfactory and I consider him to be, in every way, a young man of the very highest promise." Pretty well that for Dr. Boake, Dr. Boake retired about this time and was succeeded by the late George Todd as Principal. Arunachalam won the University Scholarship in 1870, and in September the following year he left Ceylon to enter Christ's College, Cambridge.

REMARKABLE CAREER AT THE UNIVERSITY.

He chose Christ's at the suggestions of Sir Walter Sendall, then Director of Public Instruction, who had come out for the Academy and been promoted thence to the head of the Educational Department. Sendall, with the personal interest in their pupils which charaterised the teachers of the older generation, made the lad's way easy for him at Cambridge by apprising his friends that he was sending to their care an Eastern youth of exceptional merit and promise. So introduced, and so gifted, young Arunachalam soon made his way into the best set of men, serious, thoughful

studious and alive to the fine opportunities for study and scholarship afforded them. He joined Christ's in October, 1871, and began by winning the Foundation scholarship of £50, distinguishing himself both in classics and mathematics, an achievement naturally, his persistence in which very nearly cost him his life later. Sir Joseph Hutchinson, now Chief Justice of Ceylon, and Dr. Chase, Bishop of Ely, were among his brother scholars. Arunachalam's aptitude at both classics and mathematics induced his college to sanction his trying both the classical and the mathematical triposes. Most men are happy if they can achieve one of them, but nothing daunted by the task Arunachalam girded himself to both. Lord Justice Fletcher Moulton, the greatest Senior Wrangler of the century, was Arunachalam's tutor in mathematics, while Dr. Peile, the present head of Christ's was his tutor in classics. Mr. Reid, the distinguished authority on Roman Law, was one of his classical tutors, and his English tutor was the Rev. Mr. Skeat, the great Chaucer and Shakespeare scholar. He was also exceedingly fortunate in coming into the hands of Sir John Seely, the founder of modern imperialism, which had its birth in those historic series of lectures in which he adumbrated the idea upon which the present imperial policy has been founded. To another class of readers Sir John Seely is perhaps better known as the author of that profound contribution to Christian thought, "Ecce Homo." Sir Winfield Bonser was also a contemporary of Arunachalam at Christ's, and had just taken his degree. He was the senior classic of his year and a junior Fellow of his College. Science had just been started at Christ's which has ever since taken the lead in scientific scholarship and research. H. N. Martin, Professor of Biology at John Hopkins University, Baltimore, Dr. Archibald Liversidge, now Professor of Chemistry and Dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of Sydney, and Sydney Howard Vines, now Sheradian Professor of Botany, Oxford, took the lead among the science students. Michael Foster was in charge of the Biological School and around him gathered men who have led scientific knowledge in many parts of the world ever since. Francis Balfour, brother of the Prime Minister, was a personal friend of Arunachalam. He rose to be a Professor in the University before his early death in an Alpine accident. Gerald Balfour, Eustace Balfour, Lord Tennyson (eldest son of the poet and Governor-General of Australia) the two Lytteltons—Master of Eton and the late Colonial Secretary—Edward Carpenter, Maitland (Downing Professor of Land) Foxwell, and the Rev. Mr. Cunningham—well known authorities on political economy—Laugley, who succeeded Michael Foster as Professor of Biology

were among the young students who formed the set in which Arunachalam moved and gathered his knowledge. They led a life apart from the folly and idleness which engaged the energies of the lighter spirits. They understood the possibilities for culture and, above all, for interchange of views and opinions which the University life gave them, and spent their time in the midst of serious endeavour and earnest study,

Dr. Peile induced Mr. Arunachalam to try and work for a high degree both in classics and mathematics, and nothing loth, the ardent young student agreed. It was a feat which few have performed. Arunachalam had the inclination and the aptitude, but his health was unequal to the strain, and he broke down in the middle of his exertions. A long rest and absolute abandonment of study became necessary, and though he afterwards took a good degree it fell far short of his expectations. But that breakdown in health was probably his salvation. He might have won the triposes, but might in after life have been fit for little else. He succumbed in good time, for while he lost the coveted distinction he retained his intellect unimpaired for greater and more valuable achievements in mature life. Mr. Arunuchalam gained his B.A. with honours in 1875, along with a number of distinguished Indians, with whom Christ's was the favourite college. Sayed Mahmood the distinguished judge of the Allahabad High Court, and Ananda Mohun, Bose, the eminent Calcutta lawyer and political leader, were among Mr. Arunachalam's fellow students at Christ's.

A DISCUSSION WITH THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK.

While at Christ's Mr. Arunacalam was drawn into a friendly discussion with the late Archbiahop of York, who had preached a sermon speaking with scant respect of Indian religions. Arunachalam took up cudgels on behalf of the misunderstood faiths of Hindustan, and a sparkling exchange of letters followed. The *Spectator* published the correspondence about Christmas 1874 and it attracted a great deal of discussion, and incidentally drew much notice on the bright Cambridge student from Ceylon.

THE CIVIL SERVICE.

About the time Arunachalam took his degree at Cambridge, Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy happened to be in England. He met his young nephew and practically dragged him to London to enter

for the Ceylon Civil Service examination. Arunachalam was intensely averse to the idea. His dreams and ambitions did not lie that way. He would have preferred the bar, perhaps, and was called to it from Lincoln's Inn in 1875. But that old Tamil leader would suffer no demur, and Arunachalam went in for the earliest examination for the Local Civil Service without any preparation or reading. He passed that test and in due course received his appointment from the Secretary of State. He returned te Ceylon about the middle of 1875, and was attached to the Colombo Kachcheri. He began life in the service as a judicial officer and, by accident or as a result of policy his experience in the Service does not embrace a single revenue appointment. His opportunity for showing his capacity for organisation and qualifications for administration came to him as Registrar General and Superintendent of the Census. But he has made that opportunity suffice to show his mettle. Even as an obscure magistrate in far Matara, his work was sufficiently sound and valuable to attract comment, and Sir John Budd Phear, one of the greatest Chief Justices who ever graced the Bench in Ceylon, discovered the young Civilian's worth in 1877, and in a report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, on his departure about the end of 1877, said he knew of only two men who rose to his standard of what judicial officers ought to be, and he named Berwick and Arunachalam as those two That was a magnificent compliment from a man not wont to fashion compliments. Possibly it was the recognition of his remarkable aptitude for judicial work which induced the Government to limit his employment in the Service to those functions. At any rate, he served in almost every part of the island as Magistrate, Commissioner of Requests and as District Judge. In 1886, while acting as District Judge of Batticaloa, Mr. Arunachalam came under Sir Arthur Gordon's notice, and that Governor, who never feared to act upon his own initiative, lifted him thence, over the heads of a large number of seniors, to the office of Registrar-General and Fiscal of the Western Province. The promotion was as unusual as that of Mr. W. H. Jackson to the charge of the Customs Department. There was a memorial sent up to the Secretary of State signed by almost half the Civil Service, protesting against the move, but Sir Arthur Gordon had his way and Mr. Arunachalam remained in the lucrative office to which he had been called. That it was lucrative, there can be no question. He was Registrar-General and Fiscal of the Western Province and the fees of the Fiscal alone amounted to over Rs. 10,000 a year. But the Fiscal's Department was a sink of iniquity past all excuse or defence. Mr. Arunachalam tackled the

vested interests here and long-sanctioned traditions of roguery and shiftlessness with a determined hand. He reformed the abuses, he banished the malpractices so far as they can be abolished from such a department, and urged the Government to separate the Registrar-General's work from that of the Fiscal, attaching the former to the Government Agent of the Province. He introduced a system compelling Fiscal's officers to give security, and set the whole executive machinery going as cleanly as it could be done He naturally incurred much odium from those who lost by those reforms, but he did not let that stay his hand from wielding the broom. Eventually the Fiscal's work was dissociated from that of the Registrar-General, and the latter official was left free to devote his attention to his own department. It was a department which needed attention.

REFORM OF THE REGISTRATION DEPARTMENT.

In the Registration Department chaos and corruption held merry sway when Mr. Arunachalam came to it. There was no index worth speaking of, and references to transactions and encumbrances affecting land were exceedingly difficult to ascertain. Fraud and consequently rife and dishonest transactions often took precedence over genuine dealings, and everybody's property and title were endangered. The records of the department littered the floor of one particular room, and most valuable documents, which cannot be replaced, lay where no man but an interested clerk could lay his hands upon them. There was plenty *bakhseesh* exacted and little honest work done, and yet the record room fees came to something like Rs. 25,000. Nobody could tell where the money went to. It was another Augean stables, and no Hercules could hope to claense it. It was not lack of will but lack of knowledge. No one knew how the department was worked. Mr. Arunachalam had a preserving mind. He sat by the side of the various clerks, learned their work and with much patience and perplexity caught at last a glimpse of whither and how the whole was drifting. Then he took charge and launched his reforms. He would have none of the private practice and private fees in connection with official work. He recognised the record room, appropriated the fees to the legitimate objects of the department, recast the whole system, increased and set apart a special staff to keep the records, inaugurated a real record room with a system and an index, built fine shelves, and with the surplus money derived from the fees he founded a Benevolent Fund which has now a funded capital of some Rs. 50,000, and which has saved many a clerk from

the Chetty, disgrace and penury, relieved many a widow and orphan—it pays something like Rs. 1,000 upon the death of a member—and conduced more than any grandmotherly scheme of philanthropy to make the clerks of the Department a thrifty, contented body of men. The same money has also helped to establish a reading-room and a library, and generally to make the lives and the work of the clerks lighter end brighter.

But while the registration branch has been improved, the statistical department has been reorganised in a way which has provoked the admiration of statisticians in Europe aad America. Mr. Frederick, L. Hoffman of New York, writing to the Lieutenant-Governor of Ceylon in 1898 said: "I will be permitted to express to you my great surprise at the exceptional care and thoroughness with which the Report on Vital Statistics has been prepared. Certainly in an experience extending over many years and including a knowledge of nearly all the British Colonies. I have never come in receipt of a similar report, at once so comprehensive, scientific and useful . . . there is not published in the entire United States a report equally as valuable and comprehensive." That is high praise, and it is praise to which Mr. Arunachalam was fully entitled. But his work did not stop at vital statistics and registration only.

LEGISLATION AND REGISTRATION.

He was commissioned to draft statutes remodelling the law relating to the registration of births, marriages and deaths. and the Ordinances 1 and 2 of 1895 were the result He prepared a life table of Ceylon, which has proved of exceptional value. He has reduced every conceivable aspect of the incidence of the population to disease and death to direct tabular statements, instructive at a glance, and he has by his rigid methods of registration and verification reduced crime, prevented epidemics and given us a healthier land to live in.

HIS MAGNUM OPUS.

Was, of course, the Census of Ceylon, the organisation and execution of which need not be recalled here. He promised to announce the results of the Census of 1901, within a week of the

inquiries, and Mr. Wm. Taylor smiled at the idea. But Mr. Arunachalam redeemed his pledge, and within a week the main results were published. The excellence of the organisation which enabled him to do it may be appreciated when it is recollected that it took Mr. L. F. Lee three months to publish his figures in 1891.

HIS OTHER ACTIVITIES.

Mr. Arunachalam recently has been elevated to the Legislative Council of the Colony, and has carried through an Ordinance —governing the registration of titles to land—which represents twenty years' persistent effort. He has remodelled the Notaries Ordinance, and is now busy with an Ordinance to govern the administration of intestate estates of less than Rs. 1,000 in value. But he has other spheres of activity besides his official work. Legislator, statistician, reformer, judge, and census officer as he is, he has also found time to cultivate literature, philosophy and jurisprudence. He contributed an article to the *Westminster Review* on " Luminous Sleep," which arrested attention in Europe and provoked much thought and discussion. He has translated many works of the Vedanta philosophy, including some of the Upanishads. And for many years he has been engaged in drawing up a code of civil laws, without which the codification of the procedure is a work of little utility. He has framed his code on the lines of the German civil code, admitted to be the most useful of all such efforts. Lastly, he has led the crusade for the establishment of a Ceylon University and for the study and appreciation of Ceylon history and Ceylon literature. Soon he will retire from the absorbing cares of official life, and will probably devote his hand and head to public work of the kind which is alone calculated to do lasting good to the Ceylonese. His great scholarship, his wide experience, his mature wisdom and his great faculties for organisation should then produce results which will leave his name as one of the most cherished legacies of this generation to the next.—*The Times of Ceylon.*

WHO IS A BRAHMIN ?

The four *varnas* into which Hinduism has divided its votaries are Brahma, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra. The Brahmana is declared to be the greatest and foremost of them on the authority of the Vedas and the Smrities. Now arises the question, who is a Brahmin ? What characteristic attribute of his gives him a claim for the designation ? Is it his Jiva, or body, or caste, or gnana, or karma, or dharma that makes a man a Brahmin ? It cannot be his *Jiva* In the innumerable incarnations past and present the nature of the *Jiva* has ever been the same. Nowhere do we hear that the *Jiva* changes. Ever being the same, it takes up different bodies according to its Karma. Furthermore, *Jiva* is the same in all corporeal beings. Is it then the gross body that gives the Brahmin the claim to his title ? From the lowest Chhandala upwards, the bodies of all men being no more than the component of ashes, and gases and water, they are at bottom of the same nature and are similarly affected by old age and death. It has been said that the Brahmin is white, Kshatriya red, Vaisya yellow, and the Sudra black ; but we well know this is no longer true. The inferenco therefore is that neither the colour of the skin nor its gloss gives the Brahmin his essential character Is a Brahmin so called because he has the accident of finding himself born in a Brahmin family ? If we trace the origin of great sages, we find that some of the greatest sages that have adorned this land and of whom we may justly be proud, whose lives are the highest ideals this world can show and whose transcendent piety and complete renunciation of the things of this world point to them as Masters for all times and ages, were not born in Brahmin families. Rishyasringa was born of a deer, Kausika of Kuca grass, Jambuka of a jackal, Valmiki out of antholes, Vyasa of a fisherwoman, Gautma of a hare, Vasishta of Urvasi, and Agastiya from a pitcher. All these and many others of similiar origin were esteemed true and great Brahmins, their caste and origin notwithstanding. If, however, gnana be considered the distinguishing feature of the Brahmin, many Kshatriyas who have been known to be great ' Seekers after Truth' are entitled to be so called. So the

possession of gnana is not the essential attribute of the Brahmin. It is his Karma then that makes him a Brahmin? Every one knows that all those that are living have sanchita, prarabdha, and agami Karmas, and actuated by these they perform Karma. Nor does dharma make a Brahmin. If that be so countless Kshatriyas who have given away immense wealth for charity should be known as Brahmins.

Who, then, is the Brahmin? What are his defining attributes? The Upanishads throw light on the question. They say: whoever having realised the soul that is secondless, destitute of caste, quality and action, devoid of shadharma and shadhana, the former consisting of fondness, birth, increase, change, decrease and destructions, and the latter of hunger, thirst, grief, moha, old age, and death, who is an embodiment of Truth, Intelligence, Bliss, and Infinity lives having achieved the fruit of his actions, devoid of passions, desire, and the like bad qualities, possessed of shama and dhama, divested of malice and avarice, unspoiled by pride and I-ness, the person of this description and he alone is a Brahmin. So say also Srutis, Smritis, Puranas and Itihasas.

R. K.

Avatarism is a stern spiritual reality which can no more be ignored than a well-established law of Physics. From avatarism, the possibility of an avatara is only a step of logical reasoning. In one sense, every good or great man, by whom Humanity is benefited is an avatara. It is his glorious mission to bring down wisdom, knowledge and holiness from heaven, so to speak. Our sastric avataras did not always choose to give themselves out as Divinity Incarnate. It was so with Sri Krishna, with Buddha, Christ, with Sri Chaitanya. We read in the Mahabharata that at times Sri Krishna used to take to meditation. So did Christ: so did Buddha. Sri Chaitanya used to get ecstatic at the bare mention of Sri Krishna's name. Jesus proclaimed himself as the son of God, while Mahommed was no higher than his Prophet. Sri Chaitanya was merely his bhakta or devotee.